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Dearest Son,

This is the story of Dr. Chalmers and the Submaroodle.

One day Dr. Chalmers was attending to his nasturtiums in the greenhouse when there came a knock on the door. His faithful retainer, whose name I forget, was away on his day off, so he answered the door himself.

Outside stood a young man with a briefcase.

"Dr. Chalmers," he said. "I have a wonderful invention you'll be interested in."

~~My fee is \$200 two hundred dollars a day,~~ said Dr. Chalmers pleasantly, lowering his price because he liked this young man.

"Well, it's not that sort of a deal exactly," said the young man. "May I come in?"

They went into Dr. Chalmers' study, and the young man, whose name was Desmond Alaric Fard, showed him a number of plans he had drawn.

"My submaroodle," said Desmond, "will be the most wonderful vehicle ever created. It will drive on land, it will dive in the sea and fly faster than sound."

"Really?" asked Dr. Chalmers.

"Now come see it," said Desmond.

Desmond had a motorscooter waiting outside, and they rode to his house. In his garage was the most astonishing object Dr. Chalmers had ever beheld. It was long and pointed, had wings and windows and wheels, and propellers facing both forward and backward.

"I want you to be the test pilot," said Desmond.

"I'm not sure it's safe," said Dr. Chalmers.

"It's as safe as Desmond Alaric Fard can possibly make it," said the young man.

"I see," said Dr. Chalmers, studying him closely.

"Will you try it?" asked Desmond.

"Okay," said Dr. Chalmers.

A week later, Dr. Chalmers settled himself carefully into the thick blue paisley ~~armchair~~ driver's armchair. There was a steering wheel. There were pedals. There were special controls you were supposed to knock with your knees and elbows. And, above

the driver's seat, was a large brass ring~~x~~.

"That's the jet parachute raft," said Desmond.

"Jet parachute raft?" asked Dr. Chalmers.

"Right. If you pull it, it will save you, wherever you are. It pulls you out with a ~~x~~ jet straight up, and inflates into a raft which acts as a parachute if you happened to be in the air at the time."

"I see," said Dr. Chalmers.

"Now if you're flying faster than sound..." ~~said~~ began Desmond.

"Faster than sound?" asked Dr. Chalmers, in astonishment.

"Sure," said Desmond. "In that case, uh, you want to slow down first."

"I see," said Dr. Chalmers.

"Are you ready?" asked Desmond.

"Ready as I'll ever be, I guess," said Dr. Chalmers.

They closed the cockpit hatch door. Desmond looked in and Dr. Chalmers looked out. Dr. Chalmers gave a "thumbs up" signal to show he was ready, and gunned the motor.

The submaroodle began to move. It rolled out of the garage and onto the street. Dr. Chalmers pressed on the ~~x~~ gas. It went faster than he expected. In surprise, he pulled the TAKEOFF button. Into the sky went the submaroodle!"

"I seem to be airborne," said Dr. Chalmers. "But it doesn't quite work the way I expected."

"Just wait," said Desmond over ~~the~~ the radio.

"Huh?" asked Dr. Chalmers.

"Try going faster than sound. You'll love it."

Dr. Chalmers pressed on the gas and watched the speed-needle push up toward Mach 1, the speed of sound. Closer and closer it got. The sound of the engines got louder and louder, and Dr. Chalmers expected it to get suddenly quiet, as airplanes do when they break the sound barrier.

He listened as the needle came closer and closer to Mach 1 and heard--

Blub!

"Blub?" said Dr. Chalmers. He looked outside. He was underwater.

"What kind of a submaroodle is this?" demanded Chalmers into the radio.

"I forget to tell you about the hyperspace jump," said the voice of Desmond.

"I'm going to ^{stop,} ~~minnowmawaym~~" said Chalmers.

"Oh no, not that," said Desmond. But it was too late. The needle was at zero. Dr. Chalmers felt there was something strange going on.

He was on land now. But he ~~xxx~~ was going backwards in time. All around him, automobiles were backing around him at great speed.

"On my goodness," said Dr. Chalmers.

"Don't panic," said Desmond.

"I'm getting out of here," said Dr. Chalmers. And he pulled the big brass ring.

There was the sound of ~~x~~ an explosion and Dr. Chalmers^s found himself going up in the air. But all he could see ~~xxx~~ was whiteness. He still had on his radio. "WHAT'S ALL THIS WHITE STUFF!" he yelled.

"You're inside the jet parachute raft," said Desmond.

"INSIDE!" cried Dr. Chalmers. He seized his whistle~~x~~ and blew it.

Far away he heard strange-sounding hoofbeats. They sounded as if they were being played backwards on a tape recorder. And then, into the flying white blob came, at great speed, the rear end of a horse.

"Good grief!" cried Dr. Chalmers.

It was ~~xxxxx~~ Denominator. The horse backed quickly past and looked at Dr. Chalmers very strangely. Dr. Chalmers got on and the horse backed, galloping, out and into the sky.

Many people were watching below.

Dr. Chalmers realized he was still going backward in time and didn't know what to do.

But then he also realized that if he was going backwards in time, he might at last learn where Denominator comes from.

Galloping they went across the sky; and a strange shimmer began, and the sky around seemed to turn watery and go through rainbow colors. And the horse's hoofbeats slowed. And ~~xx~~ they were slowing in a great meadow of heavy purple grass. ~~xxxx~~ Above, Dr. Chalmers ~~x~~ saw a blue sun in an orange sky. He ~~xxxx~~ got off the horse's back. The horse looked at him in surprise. The horse looked more and more surprised.

And just as the Mighty Horse Denominator, * an astonished expression on his great face, was letting out the strangest backwards whinny Dr. Chalmers had ever heard, the good ~~doctor~~ doctor felt himself being wrenched again. He felt himself being twisted upside down. And now he was back in the middle of the ~~rug~~ rug in the apartment of Desmond ~~Alaric~~ Alaric Fard.

"Everything is all right," * said Desmond. "You are travelling forward in time again."

~~What~~ "When is it?" asked Dr. Chalmers.

"It's five minutes before you took off in the Submaroodle," said Desmond.

~~"What?"~~ said Chalmers. "You mean I haven't left yet?"

"That's right," said Desmond. "Look out the window."

Dr. Chalmers looked, and saw himself climbing ~~into~~ into the Submaroodle that stood in front of the garage.

"Wait!" said Chalmers. "Stop me!"

"Oh no," said Desmond, "we mustn't. Remember that if you hadn't taken off in the Submaroodle five minutes from now ~~you~~ you wouldn't be here."

"Oh," said Dr. Chalmers. "You mean if ~~I wasn't~~ I wasn't out there at this very moment I wouldn't be here at this very moment."

"So don't interfere," said Desmond. "Excuse me, I have to go strap you in." And he went outside to help the other, earlier Dr. Chalmers into the Submaroodle.

Dr. Chalmers watched out the window as he, the earlier Dr. Chalmers, roared off in the Submaroodle, into the air and out of sight. Desmond, sitting beside him at the radio, ~~called out the instructions to Dr. Chalmers in the Submaroodle~~ that Dr. Chalmers remembered all too well from a few minutes before.

He also noticed that Desmond had a tape recorder going backwards, with Desmond's voice saying strange-sounding things.

"What's that?" demanded Dr. Chalmers.

"That's my voice talking to you while you go backwards in time," said Desmond.

"~~I~~ I'm going to stop," said the voice of Dr. Chalmers over the radio.

"Oh no, not that!" cried Desmond. Then they heard a strange noise.

"That was the end," said Desmond, "where you started going backwards in time."

"So now there's only one of me?" asked Chalmers.

"Correct," said Desmond.

Dr. Chalmers studied the young man thoughtfully. "Did you plan all of this?"

"Well, not ~~in~~ in complete detail," said Desmond.
"But it ~~worked~~ out for you, right? Except I've lost my Submaroodle."

"I'm not sure I'm sorry," said Dr. Chalmers. "I don't think you were very honest with me."

"Maybe not, but wasn't the experience worth it?" asked ~~Dr. Chalmers~~ Desmond. "Besides, maybe I can get the bugs out of it some day and it won't go backwards in time ~~like~~ like that."

"Good luck," said Dr. Chalmers, and left.

Since then Dr. Chalmers has learned that Desmond now works as a TV repairman, has married a nice girl and only works on his new Submaroodle one evening a week. And he's ~~x~~ not sure he ever wants to ride in ~~x~~ one again.

All love from

F. L. C.